

A
S E R M O N,

P R E A C H E D

On *Saturday* the Fourth of *May*, 1745,

A T

The Funeral of the late Lady GORE, in the
Parish Church of *Cellbridge*.

By the Reverend Mr. SAMUEL SHEPHERD.

D U B L I N:

Printed by GEORGE FAULKNER, MD.CC.XLV.

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RECEIVED

On the 1st of the month of February 1872

AT

The Council of the Free Trade Society in the
Hall of the Council of the Society

Resolved that the sum of £100 be paid to the
Council of the Society for the purpose of

DUBLIN: Printed by George Fawcett, 1872.



A SERMON preached the 4th of MAY.

PSALM 103. XVth and XVIth VERSES.

*The Days of Man are but as Grasse: for he
flourisheth as a Flower of the Field;
For as soon as the Wind goeth over it, it is gone:
and the Place thereof shall know it no more.*

AS the sad Occasion of this Solemnity is
but too aptly fitted to awaken in every
tender Mind, the softest Emotions; and
in every good Mind, the most serious Reflections:
So, for the regulating of the one, and for the
improving of the other, it will be very proper
to consider, what Ends the Providence of God
may have to answer by such Dispensations.—It
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is indeed true, that the Weakness or the Wickedness of Men hath too often perverted such Enquiries to the basest Purposes : And even that Shortness of our Life, which was designed to be a Spur to a more exalted Virtue, hath been made not only an Excuse, but an Argument for the wanton Jollity of some, and for the abandoned Profaneness of others.

BUT certainly, to every serious and thinking Person it must be of vast Moment to reflect, for what Reasons it comes to pass, that the Stay upon Earth of the very best Persons is often of so small Duration ? Why those, who were adorned with the most useful Accomplishments, and from whose superior Excellencies Mankind had justly conceived the highest Expectations, should yet so suddenly disappoint these fair Hopes ; and be hurried out of the World, almost as soon as they were shown to it ? or why (to pursue the elegant Allusion in my Text) those lovely Flowers, which the Hand of God had enriched with the



the brightest Lustre, and dressed out in the most inviting Colours of Beauty ; should yet in an Instant be snatched from our View ? So that *the Wind* doth but *go over them, and they are gone ; and the Place thereof shall know them no more ;*

IT might be a sufficient Answer to this Question, that, however nearly such Losses may and ought to affect those who survive them, yet the Justice of God is amply vindicated in them. God, the Sovereign Author of the World, hath an undoubted Property in all his Creatures : Not only all that we have, but all that we are, is His : And as our very being in the World is entirely and only owing to his Bounty ; so he hath an eternal Right to call us out of it again, and to resume the Blessing whenever he pleaseth. The Evidence of this is founded in the Nature of Things ; and flows clearly from those Relations, which must subsist between dependent Creatures and their Almighty Creator.

YET still it must be confessed, that however
strongly

strongly this Truth may present itself to our Understandings, it appears very little fitted to work kindly upon our Affections: It seems indeed rather to be such an Argument, as might awe us into a dumb and silent Submission; than such, as might naturally call forth a vigorous and chearful Resignation. Instead therefore of insisting upon those Motives, which may be drawn from the Justice or the Power of God; I shall point out to you some few Instances of that Comfort, which we may draw from his Goodness upon these Occasions: And when we have considered, to what excellent Purposes the early Death of such Persons may be applied; when we have examined, what important Advantages we may, and they certainly will receive by it; we shall soon be convinced, how kindly the great LORD of the Universe hath dealt with both: And how well he hath provided at once for the Virtue of those who are still left behind, and the Happiness of those who have already gone before us.

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Now, the early Death of such Persons, may be a most useful Lesson to all those, who are afflicted by it, or will meditate upon it; as it directly points out to their View, the strongest Instance of their own Mortality. We are all of us but too well inclined to amuse our Hopes with the Prospect of a long Continuance here: We look upon Life as a fixed and settled Period of Duration: And measure our own Stay upon Earth, by the Standard of the longest Liver that we know. Hence it is, that the common Examples of Mortality pass by us without any Impression: we look upon them with a cool Unconcern: and tho' we see *a thousand falling beside us, and ten thousand at our right hand*; yet we still flatter our selves, that *it shall not come nigh Us*. When the aged and infirm go down into the Grave, this is no more than what we expected. We consider them, as Fruit, which had long hung ripe, or perhaps mellowed upon the Tree; and are therefore very little surprized to find that it drops at last. As
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for Infants and Children, we consider them but as Blossoms of the Spring ; subject to be blown away by every Blast : and as our Hopes from them were very faint, so the Sense of their Death is attended with very feeble Impressions. But when we see Persons snatched away at once in the full Prime of their Years ; when we see Youth, and Health, and Vigour swallowed up in an Instant ; then it is, that the Case becomes our own ; and our Fears sink deep into us : then we look upon the deceased, as a Kind of other Self ; and tremble and start back for own Safety ; and look up with a pious Wonder and Astonishment, how our weak Vessel should have weathered out a Storm, wherein so many stronger ones had perished.

I SHALL not need to enlarge farther upon this Point. Every Man's own Conscience will suggest to him, what Fruits such Reflections as these are fitted to produce : and how naturally as well as reasonably, he who hath sober Thoughts
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of leaving this World, will be led on to make Provision for another.

SECONDLY: As the untimely Death of others is thus fitted to remind us of our own, so hath it a natural Tendency to wean our Affections from this World, and to lift them far above it: thus disposing us, the more easily and the more heartily to prepare for the happiness of another Life, by lowering our Conceits, and rectifying our Opinion of all that we found most desirable in This. The Blessings, which flow in upon us here, are some of them so necessary, and all of them so comfortable to us, that we are easily inclined to fix our Hearts upon them. And indeed, considering the many Opportunities which they afford us, of giving Happiness to our Fellow Creatures as well as to our selves, it is no Wonder if we are led very earnestly to desire them. We value them, and justly too, for being so useful both to us and to others. But the Evil is, that we are apt also to value our selves too much upon them. How many have been tempted to employ

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them to bad Purposes? How many to wax proud, upon employing them to good ones? Even the most Innocent are yet in Danger of being betrayed by them, at least into Security, if not into Vice. How many good Men have been known to sink under the Weight of an unexpected Affluence? And those, who had withstood all the Fury of the Season, been seen to perish by a too prosperous Gale? It is true, a very little Recollection might remove all these Dangers: but we will not stay to attend to it. In the Gaiety of our Hearts we have said, *We are all Gods*: and therefore, in Compassion to our Folly, the true G O D interposeth to convince us, that we are all but Men. *In my Prosperity*, says Holy David, *I said, I shall never be removed; Thou Lord of thy Goodness hadst made my Hill so strong!* But what follows in the very next Verse? *Thou didst turn thy Face from me, and I was troubled.* And immediately after, comes in the proper Remedy: *Then cried I unto the Lord, and gat me to my Lord right humbly.* And thus it is with the very best

best of us. While the World smiles, and all our Affairs go smooth and easy, we are too apt to fancy, that the Blessings, which we have enjoyed so long, shall continue with us for ever; and in the fullness of our Abundance, if not to forget God, at least to grow unmindful of Him.

WHAT a Stir is there made in the World, with our Parts, and our Beauty, and our Family, and our Friends, and our Fortune? Alas! A very few such Instances, as we have now before us, would soon reduce all these Advantages to their proper Standard; and shew us, how very little we were to depend upon them all. If the best Materials of what this World calls Happiness had been able to support one goodly Frame, we had not now been assembled upon this melancholy Occasion.

AND, who now will vainly pride himself upon any, or upon all his outward Accomplishments? what avails it now to have been youthful, and lovely, and admired? to have had the Joys, and the Honours, and the Treasures of the
World.

World in Possession? to have grown up, with the Praises of the Wise; and the Esteem of the Good, and the Love of all? surely upon this Occasion we may well take up the Complaint of good *Job*; and say of every earthly Blessing, as he did of his Friends, “ *Miserable Comforters are ye All!* ” Surely we may say, that to set our Hearts upon this World, and to put any Trust in all its Glories, is literally *to take hold of the Staff of a broken Reed*; which will surely fail us when most we want its Assistance, and *will pierce both thro’ the Hand, and the Heart of whoever leaneth on it.*

THIS we may all see: but few of us will be brought to believe it, until we feel it. And therefore very often out of pure Mercy and Tenderness, GOD takes away from us those Blessings, wherein we placed our greatest Happiness: that our own Experience may most sensibly convince us, how little reason we had to fix our Hearts upon any earthly Enjoyment: that by such wholesome Severities, he may work us up to an
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entire Submission to his Will, and a firm Dependence upon Him: that by tearing what we loved from us, he may draw us still nearer to Himself: and in a Word, that by making us feel the Vanity of all that this Life can afford us, he may the better prepare our Hearts, and weaken our Affections, and quicken our Endeavours, to seek out for that true and substantial Happiness, which he at first designed us to partake of in another.

THUS, I have pointed out two very obvious and important Uses, which we may draw to our selves from the untimely Death of others. And, if to the common Circumstances of Youth, and Health, and Strength, we will add those Excellencies, which we have seen to shine out in such Persons, and whereof we have now before us a most conspicuous Example; this Argument from the Divine Goodness will be so much the stronger: because, the farther the Opinion of such Excellencies spreads, the more will People be prepared for these good Impressions. A Young Person, Dead, is always a proper Object of our
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most serious Contemplations. But where that young Person hath given a full Hope of being useful to Mankind; where we have received not only the Promise, but an Earnest of good Actions; there it becomes a general Loss: and every one, who suffers by it, as he is Partner in the Affliction, so is he, by a serious and thoughtful turn of Mind, prepared for those Reflections, which will be most likely to turn it to his greatest Advantage.

LET me add, for the Sake of those who are most nearly concerned in such Misfortunes; that however severe such Dispensations at first seem, it is always in our Power, and GOD hath put it in our Way, to make them highly useful to us. That tender Feeling, which gives such a Sting to our Grievs; the Love of Solitude and Thoughtfulness; the Contempt of the World; and the Refusal of Comfort which attend them; are the sure Ingredients of that Temper, which best disposes us for a proper Recollection of our past Behaviour, and a suitable Carriage under our present

sent Distress : so that the same Hand, which administers to us the bitter Cup of Affliction, points out also the sure Way to make it a most healing Medicine: and the same Severity, which makes us smart under the Divine Rod, puts us into the fittest Temper for receiving Benefit by its Discipline.

ART thou therefore visited with some sore Calamity? hast thou lost the Friend of thy Bosom? or the Delight of thine Eyes? the Companion of thy Youth? or the Hope of thine Age? Dreadful as these Tryals are, they will yet more immediately lead thee to look up to GOD, the Author of them : to consider for what Wise purposes he hath ordained them : to call to mind thy former Conduct : to strengthen thy Faith : and to renew thy Repentance : and by an exemplary Patience, and an humble Resignation, to work out for thy self a full Recompence, even *an Eternal Weight of Glory.*

I COME now in the second Place, very briefly to point out some of those Advantages, which the early Death of virtuous Persons brings to themselves.

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As first : They are freed so much the sooner from all the Troubles and Calamities, which might attend them here. This we are all willing enough to allow in the Case of such as were poor, or deformed, or feeble. To them, we we count an early Death, an early Blessing : but where Health and Strength have waited upon the Constitution ; where Beauty hath adorned it, and Riches flowed in upon it ; there our Notions are apt to alter ; and we are hardly brought to conceive, how a Person, who hath all these Advantages, can be in danger of being miserable. And yet there are ten thousand Instances, wherein every one of these Blessings, hath not only not prevented the sad Distress of those who were possessed of them, but hath even contributed to it. We need not have recourse to History, for the confirming of this truth : every Man's own Experience may convince him.

THERE is yet a much more valuable Advantage than the Former ; and that is, they are the sooner freed from those Temptations which
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might assault them ; which might not only embitter their Lives here, but endanger their Happiness hereafter. While we stay in this World, we are always in a State of Warfare : and however diligent and successful we may be in our Attacks against Vice, yet considering both the Number and the Nature of our Enemies, we can never be sure of an entire Victory. The best Inclinations, the best Habits, may some time or another be corrupted : the severest Virtue may be thrown off its Guard : and the Glory of an whole Life polluted in one unhappy Moment. This I mention, to shew that it is possible, even for the best Dispositions to fail : and in a matter of such vast Importance, we cannot but account it a great Blessing to be delivered from the Danger even of a Possibility. The strongest Virtue is at best but a tender Plant ; and requires to be nourished with great Care and Caution. How easily are we frightened by Adversity ! how soon doth Prosperity betray us ! In ourselves we carry about us the Seeds of Corruption : and too often,

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even the Confidence of our own Innocence proves our worst Enemy, and helps to destroy us.

ALAS! in this Garden of Life, the fairest Flower can give us but very faint Affurances, that it will bloom to Perfection. The single Blast of a Tempest, may tear it from us for ever: the Insects, that flutter in the Sunshine, may spoil and pollute it: the Stem, that it stands on may wither and desert it: and the very Ground, to which it owes its Nourishment, may sink away from it; or harbour such Enemies as waste and consume it. But once transplanted into the Heavenly Paradise, it spreads, and blooms, and flourishes for ever.

AND this is the last Advantage, which I shall mention of the early Death of virtuous Persons; that it puts them in Possession of their eternal Reward. With them, the Time of working is now spent; and they are gone to receive the Recompence of their Labours. Their Day of Tryal is now over; and their Day of Reward is at Hand. Happy They! who have thus safely got out of
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the Reach of this World, and all its Miseries, and all its Temptations! Who have out-rid all the Storms, which encumbered them in this Voyage of Life! and are now *at rest in the Haven, where they would be! Who are numbered among the Children of God! and whose Lot is among the Saints!*

IN this comfortable View; in this modest Confidence of an happy Eternity; surely we may well look upon this excellent Person, whose Remains lie now before us. Surely that more than filial Duty and Affection; (the just and willing Return of a most prudent and tender Education) that sweet Ingenuoufness of Disposition; that unaffected Meekness and Humility of Mind; that modest Innocence, which threw a new Grace round every Part of her Behaviour; and (which I particularly mention from my own Experience) that artless Sincerity in Religion, so rare among young People; and that Impatience of Scandal; and Tenderness for the Failings of others; as they were her great Ornaments in this Life,

Life, will also continue to her Happiness in another.

INSTEAD therefore of repining at our own Loss, let us all labour to imitate her Perfections. Let all those who knew her, study to be like her : Let them kindle at so bright an Example ; and blush to confess, that they are not able to arrive at the Goal, which in so tender an Age she had attained before them. In a Word, let every one of us (whatever our Years or Condition may be) still follow her in those Steps, which have pointed out her Way to Glory. Let us not number our Days by the Minutes, or the Hours, that mark them ; but by the true Improvements, that we have made in them : Remembring always, that our whole Happiness consists in the regular and unfeigned Practice of Virtue : and that, to him, who fails in this important Point, the longest Life will prove miserably short : But *to him, who by a faithful Continuance in good Works seeks for Glory and Honour and Immortality,* the shortest Life will be long enough.

The E N D.

